



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** ★★ ★

Train Neighbors to Prepare for Disasters



The Challenge



According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in the first nine months of 2013, there have been 83 disaster declarations from 35 State and 5 Tribal Governments. These declarations of disaster have included severe winter storms, forest and wild fires, flooding, tornadoes and explosions. Even if you do not live in an area that is prone to severe weather, communities have been devastated by home fires, train and plane wrecks also. Helping your community to prepare for disasters can mitigate the hardship that is a part of any crisis situation.

This toolkit will help you to address this community need by:

- Explaining associated terms
- Highlighting helpful resources
- Sharing effective planning steps
- Outlining project management tips
- Providing ideas for communicating your message
- Sharing tips for reflection and reporting



Prepare

Learn Associated Terms

Before you jump-start the planning phase of your project, be sure you know the terms associated with the work you are about to do.



- **FEMA:** The Federal Emergency Management Agency supports citizens and first responders to ensure that the nation builds, sustains, and improves our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

- **First Responders:** emergency service personnel trained in urgent medical care and other emergency procedures responsible for going immediately to the scene of an accident, emergency, or large-scale disasters to provide assistance.
- **Preparedness:** Building the capacity of a community to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from an emergency, crisis, hazard or disaster.
- **Hazard Mitigation:** Activities that reduce disaster losses and protect life and property from future disaster damages.
- **Disaster Kit:** a collection of basic items your household may need in the event of an emergency including food, water, and other supplies sufficient to last for three days.
- **Emergency Plan:** A plan, made in advance, that includes: how you will get to a safe place; how you will contact family members; how you will get back together with family members if separated; and what you will do in different situations such as a house fire, as well as other hazards—tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.—that are common in your area.

Identify a Location

The location for your disaster preparedness project may depend on the type of project you plan to implement.

- For a community-wide education event or to create disaster kits, you will need a large location: go to community centers, schools, houses of worship, or public libraries that have a meeting space and participants.
- Planning to go door-to-door to distribute disaster preparedness information: contact the Red Cross or local fire department to identify areas with the greatest need.

Browse Helpful Resources

- FEMA (<http://www.fema.gov/>)
- FEMA: Build a Disaster Supplies Kit (<http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit>)
- American Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org/>)
- Centers for Disease Control Emergency Preparedness and Response Site (<http://emergency.cdc.gov/>)
- Census Data and Emergency Preparedness (<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/emergencies/>)
- EPA: Water Emergency/Incident Information (<http://water.epa.gov/drink/emereprep/>)
- Do1Thing.com (<http://do1thing.com/>)
- Citizen Corps (<http://www.citizencorps.gov/>)
- Community Emergency Response Teams (<http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/>)
- Medical Reserve Corps (<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/>)
- National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (<http://www.nvoad.org/>)
- Serve.gov Community Preparedness Tip Sheet (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/toolkits/disaster/four>)



Plan

A successful group effort requires a motivated team whose members agree upon clearly defined tasks, set reachable goals, and act with inspiration and purpose.



Build a Team

- Start off planning with folks you know, and ask them to tell others to join your efforts.
- Consider inviting members of your local fire department, Red Cross chapter, or FEMA to be a part of your planning group.
- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- As you work, talk about the parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s impact and your own.

Set Goals

Build your planning team

Whether you are a team of few or many, a planning team will help you execute all aspects of your project. Below are some roles your planning team can take on. If it's only you: reach out to volunteers past and present to fulfill these roles:

- Project Development
 - Volunteer Recruitment and Management Team
 - Communications Team
 - VIP/Leadership Engagement Team
 - Fundraising Team
 - Event Team
-
- Set goals, such as number of people trained, items supplied, and folks pledging to pass along what they've learned to others.
 - Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. Ensure you and your team choose goals you can all agree on.

Plan Your Project

There are a number of ways that you can plan to train neighbors in preparing for disasters. Here are a few ideas:

- Distribute disaster preparedness and/or fire safety information door-to-door
- Plan an emergency preparedness workshop with various speakers that is open to the public
- Create disaster kits

The following steps may be helpful in creating your disaster preparation project:

- Research the kinds of weather-related events that are likely to occur where you live. A winter storm, flood, wild fire, earthquake, tornado, or hurricane, each requires a different approach for preparation. If you know what to expect, you'll be better able to prepare adequately.
- Research the common causes of house fires and other home-related hazards such, carbon monoxide, or flooding due to broken pipes. This information will be available through your local fire department or Red Cross chapter.
- Connect with nonprofit and government agencies such as the Red Cross and FEMA. They offer information about what you need to have on hand for any and every disaster. Representatives from these or related organizations may be available to help train volunteers who are going door-to-door or be a speaker at your workshop as part of your service event.
- If you are distributing information door-to-door, ensure that all volunteers are well versed on the emergency information you are sharing and can answer questions about it.
- For large groups of volunteers going door-to-door, map out the targeted community and give each volunteer a map of their territory so that volunteers don't visit the same home multiple times.
- If you want to create disaster kits, consider seeking in-kind donations from local businesses for items for the kits. In addition to food, water, flashlights, batteries, and other supplies, consider sharing information on how to secure vital documents so that they are not lost in an emergency.
- [Incorporate learning into any service you do \(node/292\)](#) by sharing information about the issues your project addresses and about Dr. King's work and teachings as it relates to the issue.

Raise Resources for Equipment/Supplies

Involving and engaging kids

Whether kids show up to volunteer or they unexpectedly arrive with parents who can benefit from your service, have activities that they can do such as:

- Carry light objects
- Decorate cards, lunch bags, or placemats
- Serve refreshments to the adults hard at work
- Organize or tidy the project spaces
- Watch a film about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

See [Engaging Kids in Service \(node/296\)](#) for more on kid-friendly service projects.

What supplies will you need to promote disaster preparation in your community?

- Seek financial and in-kind donations from businesses for the supplies you'll need to run your project
- Solicit funds from team members and/or others to purchase items you need for a successful MLK Day
- Purchase the necessary supplies prior to the service day so they are ready to go on MLK Day.

Manage Your Project

The following tips will assist you with managing a successful service project.

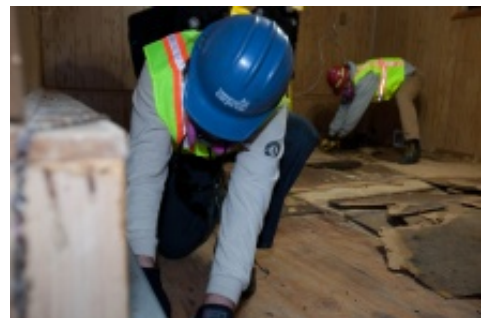
- Utilize to do lists for the days leading up to, day of and post event follow-up.
- Make sure team leaders or coordinators are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet volunteers or community members as they arrive.
- Even if some volunteers will be doing door-to-door distribution of materials, it is important that the group start off the day together and review what you are trying to accomplish.
- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event: educating the community about disaster preparedness in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Organize volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greet participants, hand out refreshments, respond to questions, or distribute materials.
- Build moments of reflection into your planned activities. Share stories and words from Dr. King and about any insights you've gained so far about the connection between your service and Dr. King's teachings.
- Document the day with photos or videos and be sure to have participants sign a photo release form.
- Conduct your event, offering continuous encouragement to participants.



Communicate Your Message

Communication is a key part of any service project. You will need to communicate about:

- Getting volunteers to help you plan or implement your service activity
- Building partnerships with potential collaborators or sponsors
- Raising funds or in-kind donations for your project
- Informing potential participants who might benefit from your service



Publicize your event using a combination of low-tech outreach, traditional, and social media.

Low-tech Outreach

- Post flyers in public places

- Use community bulletin boards
- Ask area businesses to spread the word (e.g. flyers at registers or posters in store windows)
- Make announcements at schools, churches, or civic groups

Traditional Media

- Invite the news media (print and broadcast) to report about your upcoming event or to attend and share information about accomplishments. Use a [press release \(Node/252\)](#) or a [media advisory \(Node/252\)](#).
- Make follow-up phone calls to the news media
- Place free ads in the community affairs section of your local papers

Digital and Social Media

- Submit your event to local online calendars and LISTSERVs
- Promote your project, and document the day, through Facebook, Tweets, and pictures
- Reach out to a local blogger and ask if he/she might cover the event



Share Impact

Assess and Reflect

Host an official debriefing meeting for planning team members after the service day. Ask the team to reflect on the following questions:

- Examine the goals you set for yourselves. Which ones did you meet? Which exceeded your expectations? And which goals did you not quite reach?
- What did you accomplish?
- Who did your work impact in your community?
- What went well and what could be improved for next time?
- What disaster preparation resources or outreach methods would you use again in the future? Which ones would you forego?
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Go back to your initial investigation into the local problems you elected to help tackle and ask more questions. For example:
If you distributed information about disaster preparedness in your community by sending groups door-to-door, what could you provide your community as a follow-up to better prepare them for a natural disaster? What other organizations or programs in your community



could you partner with to build upon your work?

Share Your Story

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize a disaster preparedness event once they hear what you accomplished. Share your service accomplishments with:

- Volunteers, financial and in-kind supporters and constituents groups; the accomplishments could accompany a thank you letter
- The media; thank all media who reported on your planned activities or covered you service project along with sharing accomplishments from the project and any plans for the future
- The Corporation for National and Community Service; learn about multiple ways to [share your story](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share>)

86 reads

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